

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 00177 111611Z  
ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6416

S E C R E T BEIRUT 0177

EXDIS

FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: OVIP  
SUBJECT: VISIT BY PRESIDENT SARKIS TO WASHINGTON

1. I CALLED ON FONMIN BOUTROS AT HIS REQUEST JAN. 10.  
AFTER DISCUSSING VARIOUS OTHER MATTERS, BOUTROS ASKED ME  
WHAT I THOUGHT OF PRESIDENT SARKIS' JAN. 6 SPEECH SAYING  
LEBANON COULD NOT ACCEPT PERMANENT SETTLEMENT OF PALESTINIANS  
HERE. I SAID I THOUGHT MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF SPEECH WAS  
THAT PRESIDENT HAD SPOKEN FORCEFULLY ABOUT SOMETHING.  
BOUTROS SAID HE HOPED I WOULD SAY AS MUCH TO SARKIS. HE HAD  
WORKED ON HIM FOR 48 HOURS TO GET HIM TO TAKE A PUBLIC STAND.

2. BOUTROS CONTINUED, SAYING THAT NOW GOL MUST DECIDE HOW  
TO FOLLOW UP PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE. THEY WERE CONSIDERING A  
DIPLOMATIC CAMPAIGN THROUGH THEIR MISSIONS ABROAD AND WERE  
SENDING THE TEXT TO ALL OF THEM. DID I THINK THEY SHOULD  
MOVE QUICKLY IN THIS RESPECT OR TAKE THEIR TIME? I SAID THAT  
IF THEY WANTED TO HAVE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH TAKEN SERIOUSLY  
THEY SHOULD MOVE SOONER RATHER THAN LATER.

3. BOUTROS THEN SAID GOL WAS CONSIDERING POSSIBILITY OF  
SARKIS GOING TO THE VATICAN, PARIS AND WASHINGTON TO  
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REGISTER THE LEBANESE POSITION. WHAT DID I THINK? I  
SAID PRESIDENT CARTER'S SCHEDULE WAS VERY FULL AND I  
DOUBTED HE WOULD HAVE TIME TO SEE SARKIS IN THE NEAR  
FUTURE. IF THEY WANTED TO MAKE THE REQUEST, HOWEVER,  
I WOULD FORWARD IT FAITHFULLY AND SUPPORT IT. BOUTROS  
SAID THEY WOULD RATHER NOT PUT IN THE REQUEST IF IT  
COULD NOT BE MET. RATHER, HE WOULD LIKE ME TO MAKE A

PRIVATE SOUNDING, WHICH I UNDERTOOK TO DO.

4. BOUTROS THEN SAID THAT IF A VISIT BY SARKIS WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE, HE MIGHT UNDERTAKE A RATHER BROADER INITIATIVE HIMSELF--VISITING OTTAWA, LONDON, MOSCOW AND PERHAPS CAIRO IN ADDITION TO ROME, PARIS AND WASHINGTON. WHAT DID I THINK OF THAT? I SAID WE WOULD OF COURSE WELCOME HIM IN WASHINGTON, ALTHOUGH, AGAIN, I DID NOT KNOW WHETHER THE PRESIDENT'S SCHEDULE WOULD PERMIT HIM TO SEE HIM. BOUTROS SAID HE WOULD ONLY WANT 30 TO 45 MINUTES.

5. I SAID THE USG WAS ALREADY PRETTY WELL INFORMED ON THE LEBANESE POSITION ON PALESTINIANS, GIVEN HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH SECRETARY VANCE HERE AND OUR OWN REPORTING. BOUTROS ADDED THAT HE HAD ALSO MENTIONED IT TO PRESIDENT CARTER IN NEW YORK. HE FELT IS WOULD BE USEFUL TO REITERATE IT IN PERSON, HOWEVER.

COMMENT: I FULLY REALIZE THE CONSTRAINTS AND DEMANDS ON THE PRESIDENT'S TIME, BUT IT WOULD BE VERY USEFUL, AND NOT JUST FOR DOMESTIC LEBANESE REASONS, IF HE COULD RECEIVE SARKIS. ALTHOUGH LEBANON IS NOT A CONFRONTATION STATE AND HAS TAKEN A BACK SEAT IN THE DISCUSSIONS OF A SETTLEMENT, IT IS DEEPLY CONCERNED IN THE OUTCOME AND, IN SPITE OF ITS WEAKNESS, IS IN A POSITION TO AFFECT THAT OUTCOME TO SOME EXTENT, PROVIDED IT CAN WORK UP THE NERVE TO DO SO.

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7. FIRST OF ALL, IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT LEBANON COULD BE INDUCED TO PARTICIPATE IN A PEACE CONFERENCE EVEN THOUGH SYRIA DID NOT. IF JORDAN JOINED THE CONFERENCE AND IT APPEARED THAT THE SETTLEMENT ENVISAGED MIGHT DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE PALESTINIAN PRESENCE, PARTICIPATION WOULD BE BERY TEMPTING TO THE LEBANESE, WHO ARE ALREADY NERVOUS ABOUT THE FACT THAT THEY ARE NOT SEATED AT THE TABLE WHERE DECISIONS AFFECTING THEIR FUTURE ARE BEING MADE. SINCE THE DURABILITY OF THE PEACE WILL BE DIRECTLY PROPORTIONAL TO ITS UNIVERSALITY AMONG THE ARABS, WE BELIEVE IT IN OUR INTEREST TO DO WHAT WE CAN TO HAVE LEBANON PARTICIPATE IN THE PROCESS SOONER RATHER THAN LATER, BEARING IN MIND OF COURSE THE FRAGILITY OF THEIR PRESENT POSITION.

8. SECONDLY, IF THE JERUSALEM CONFERENCE GOES SOUR AND THERE IS NO GLOBAL SETTLEMENT, OR THE SETTLEMENT IS RESTRICTED TO ISRAEL AND EGYPT, THERE IS A STRONG LIKELIHOOD THAT SOUTHERN LEBANON WILL BECOME A THEATER OF WAR.

9. IN BOTH RESPECTS, A PRESIDENT SARKIS WHOSE PRESTIGE AND SELF-CONFIDENCE HAD BEEN IMMEASURABLY INCREASED BY A VISIT

TO THE WHITE HOUSE WOULD BE MUCH MORE LIKELY TO TAKE THE  
PLUNGE OR HOLD THE LINE AGAINST PALESTINIAN EXTREMIST THAN  
ONE WHO HAS BEEN TOLD WE DO NOT HAVE TIME FOR HIM. SARKIS  
IS IN A POSITION NOT UNLIKE HUSSEIN'S TWENTY YEARS AGO.  
OUR PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT THEN WAS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN  
KEEPING HUSSEIN RESOLUTE IN THE FACE OF HIS SEEMINGLY  
UNSURMOUNTABLE PROBLEMS. SARKIS NEEDS THE SAME SORT OF  
ENCOURAGEMENT.

10. I THEREFORE RECOMMEND THAT WE SERIOUSLY CONSIDER AN  
INVITATION TO SARKIS TO PAY AN OFFICIAL OR WORKING VISIT  
TO WASHINGTON. HE COULD FOLLOW THIS WITH A VISIT TO LEBANESE  
COMMUNITIES IN THE UNITED STATES AND RETURN HERE STRENGTHENED  
AND MORE ABLE TO DEAL FORCEFULLY WITH THE CONTINUING CRISIS.

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